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ABSTRACT

Voting behavior of blacks is examined with specific regard to racial intolerance. Factors studied include racial identification, amount of interracial contact, and the black candidate's job performance. In 1969, interviewers collected data on 400 black respondents' attitudes about Carl Stokes (the black incumbent mayoralty candidate), the other white mayoralty candidates, and respondents' knowledge of and participation in local and national politics. Only 20 of the 400 participants indicated that they would not vote for Stokes, although the mayor had not concentrated on civil rights issues as he had in the previous election. Therefore, the degrees of respondents' positiveness were examined. Results indicate that strong racial identification is not related to the participant's image of the black candidate and that interracial contact is related to a more positive image for some voters. In only one group of voters, those characterized by a dissident view of the political system, was a positive image of the black candidate related to low interracial contact. Further, participants' image of Stokes was related to their satisfaction with his previous term. The conclusion is that black support of a black candidate is not based on racial intolerance. (KC)

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THE BLACK VOTE:

RACIAL INTOLERANCE OR THE POLITICS OF PERCEPTION

by

Richard R. Scott

SO 013 169

Paper presented at SEPA, March 1980

One indicator of racial intolerance or prejudice is the extent to which political voting is primarily based upon the candidate's race. Although social psychologists have used such indicators of racial intolerance as stereotyping (Jones, 1972), aggression (Schulman, 1974), helping behavior (Gaertner and Dovidio, 1977), non-verbal communication (Weitz, 1972), expressed tolerance (Scott, 1979), and sociometric choices (Slavin, 1979), they have seldom used political choices. Political scientists, although well aware that political choices based upon race can be indicative of racial intolerance, have tended to emphasize the potential for social conflict inherent in racial voting or cleavages rather than the underlying intolerance (Rae and Taylor, 1970).

Nevertheless, as a measure of racial intolerance, political voting has several advantages. It is a simple and direct (e.g., for or against) behavioral measure. Conceptually, political choices appear to be closely related to sociometric measures. However, because voting is imbedded within the political system, its interpretation may not be as straightforward as other measures of intolerance. Voters may be expected to differ in their perceptions of the political system, as well as in their involvement with politics. Consequently, one would expect the meaning attached to a vote for a particular candidate to also differ. Indeed, it is conceivable that for some voters who have a negative

perception of the political system, a vote for a particular candidate represents a negative evaluation of that candidate (e.g., politics is wheeling and dealing; wheelers and dealers ought to be elected).

Further, in one study of the responses of white voters to a black candidate, it was found that whites responded to the black along two dimensions (Vanneman and Pettigrew, 1972). The first dimension, "contact racism," refers to the willingness of whites to have interracial contact with blacks. The second dimension, "competitive racism," involves the belief that blacks are receiving too many benefits (from government programs). Significantly, only competitive racism was associated with unwillingness to vote for a black candidate.

Despite these problems with voting as a measure of racial intolerance, its simplicity and directness make it an appealing measure. It is especially appealing as a measure of black racial intolerance. As many studies have indicated, data collected from blacks, a subordinate group, may be more subject to social desirability biases than are data collected from whites (Summers and Hammonds, 1966; Schuman and Hatchett, 1974; Scott, 1979). As a result, attitude measures and other non-behavioral measures may seriously underestimate black racial intolerance.

And, although most black candidates receive the overwhelmingly majority of black votes when competing against a white candidate, little, if any, research has addressed the question of whether or not the black vote is indicative of

racial intolerance (Pettigrew, 1972). A plausible alternative explanation might posit that a black candidate, because of greater knowledge about the concerns of black voters, is better able to focus his campaign on those concerns.

One way to address this question involves comparing those blacks who voted for the black candidate to those blacks who did not. Several problems arise with approach. First, very often, few black voters fail to vote for the black candidate; few black voters who did not vote for the black candidate are available for comparison. However, another measure of candidate support, the candidate's Political Image, can be used as a basis of comparison.

Another problem is related to the nature of political perceptions. Sears (1969) noted that the perception of the political system (e.g., political identification) can affect the perception of a political candidate. Therefore, it is necessary to adjust for individual differences in how the political system is perceived.

Third, it is necessary to determine along which dimensions the comparisons are to be made. Because of their importance for white interracial voting behavior, the dimensions of racial identification and interracial contact appear to be appropriate (Vanneman and Pettigrew, 1972). If the black support is based upon racial intolerance or prejudice against whites, then one would also expect black support to be related to a positive affect for blacks. And, because interracial contact, under certain conditions, reduces racial intolerance (Amir, 1969), then we would expect that interracial contact meeting those

conditions to be negatively related to support based on racial intolerance.

Additionally, we would expect support based on racial intolerance unrelated to the black candidate's job performance. Because an important element of a voter's perception of a politician's job performance is related to the voter's satisfaction with the political services he receives, then we would also expect satisfaction with political services to be unrelated to candidate support based upon racial intolerance.

Finally, it is necessary to select a contest in which a black candidate is competing against a white, in which race has "some" salience as an issue, and which allows some generalizability to other such contests.

METHOD

Data

The data used for this analysis was collected in Cleveland between April 18, 1969 and May 21, 1969 (five months before the Democratic primary and seven months before the November mayoralty election) under the direction of the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago.

Using the 1965 Special Census of Cleveland Poverty Zones (U. S. Bureau of the Census, 1966, 1967), 50 of 384 predominantly black precincts were randomly selected. Within each precinct, two blocks were randomly selected and assigned to 14 experienced black interviewers. For each block, the interviewers had a quota of one male and one female between 21 and 35 years old, and one male and one female over 35.

The data contain information on 400 black respondents' attitudes about Carl Stokes, the black incumbent mayoralty candidate, the other white mayoralty candidates, the political system, including the respondents' knowledge of, and participation in, politics and various political issues both local and national. Also included is some information on the respondents' personalities and demographic characteristics.

Of the 400 respondents in this sample, about half (50.5%) are male with a mean age of 41. About 69% of the sample are married with 65% of the sample having a 9th grade through high school education. Most of the respondents (65%) have lived in Cleveland for 10 years with 63% having lived in the same neighborhood for at least 4 years. For 87%, their neighborhood is either "all black," or "mostly black." Sixty percent of the sample were working full time, but only 45% owned their home; only 55% reported earning $6,000 or above (only 22% earned $10,000 or above), and 17% earned under $3,000. In essence, then, this sample is typical of a large part of black America (U. S. Bureau of the Census, 1971).

Several other points should be made about the context in which these data were collected. After having lost in his first bid for the mayoralty in 1965, Stokes was successful in his second attempt in 1967. His 1967 victory was attributed, in part, to his successful efforts in preventing summer disorders and in part to the support he received from Civil Rights organizations, including Martin Luther King. Thus, his first term in office was widely perceived as an adjunct to the Civil Rights movement.

Second, although Stokes was successful in his handling of summer disorders and in attracting federal funds to Cleveland, he was not able to maintain the fervent support of the black voters. Consequently, the number of registered black voters declined and generally, his support in the black community softened. It was therefore assumed that if Stokes received the same percentages of the white and black vote, he would lose in his re-election bid (November 1969).

Last, Stokes' only chance of victory was to increase his percentage of the white vote by three to six points. Because of the greater number of white voters, this increase would more than offset the loss of support in the black community. In order to gain this additional white vote, it was necessary to assuage any fears that (most) whites might have about a black mayor. And, this, in turn, necessitated dissociating the re-election campaign from the previous election's association with the Civil Rights movement.

Measures

A. Covariate. In order to adjust for those differences in the perception of the political system that might also affect the evaluation of a candidate, the variable SYSTEM PERCEPTION was operationalized. Because many studies have indicated the importance of "trust" in government and the "responsiveness" of the political system (Miller, 1974; Nie et al., 1976; Scott, 1976) for political behavior, these two dimensions were factor scaled[1] from a number of items dealing with interest in the outcome of elections and belief in the responsiveness of political institutions, respectively.

They were then dichotomized from "continuous" variables into high and low "categorical" variables and "crossed" with each other to form four groups, with about one-quarter of the sample in each group (see Table 1).

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Table 1 about here
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B. Dependent variable. The problem of finding a measure of candidate preference stems from the fact that these respondents were overwhelmingly in favor of their incumbent mayor. Out of 400 respondents, only 20 expressed the intention of not voting for Stokes. Similarly, 394 respondents thought Stokes had helped "a great deal," or "some" in solving Cleveland's problems, while only 2 thought he had made "no progress at all."

The basic assumption underlying the solution arrived at is that while voting for a candidate is a dichotomy (yes or no), candidate preference is not (Rusk and Weisberg, 1974; Weisberg and Rusk, 1970; Stricker, 1963). Therefore, even though the overwhelming majority of respondents had a positive evaluation of Stokes, it is still possible to identify those voters who were relatively more positive toward Stokes. This was accomplished by a criterion-referenced scaling method. It resulted in a score for each individual's "image" of Stokes relative to the sample's mean "image" of Stokes.

From a list of 11 descriptive words and phrases commonly used in the media to describe Stokes (see Table 2), respondents

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Table 2 about here
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were asked to choose the three they thought best described Stokes. For each respondent, these three items (scored "1" if chosen) represented that respondent's image of Stokes. These items which were chosen at least 156 times were then regressed against the respondent's evaluation of Stokes' performance as mayor. ("How much progress do you think Mayor Stokes has made in solving Cleveland's problems?" 3 = A great deal; 2 = Some and Don't Know; 1 = No progress at all.) These regression coefficients (see Table 3) were then used to weight the five image items. The result was an image score for each respondent; this score is the candidate's Political Image.

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Table 3 about here
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C. Independent variable: Racial Identification. The most important element of racial identification is a positive attachment to the racial membership group.

This pride in being black implies an appreciation of those things black, rather than the deprecation associated with self-hate. This implies that those blacks high in racial identification (i.e., positive racial identification) would prefer to "live around blacks," and have their children "go to all black schools." Thus, these two Likert items were used to code Racial Identification.[2] Answering "all black" for both items was scaled as the high racial identification and "mostly white" on both items low identification. Since living around blacks was considered the "purer" of the two items for measuring identification, it was weighted more

heavily in the coding. Respondents scoring "4" on the "live around blacks" item and "3" on the "schools" item were considered higher in racial identification than those scoring "4" on the "schools" item and "3" on the "live around" item.

D. Independent variable: Interracial Contact. Amir (1969), in a comprehensive review of interethnic contact, found that "changes in ethnic relations do occur following intergroup contact" (p. 319). And, agreeing with Allport (1954), Amir points out that the direction of that change (favorable or unfavorable) depends on the conditions under which the contact occurred. Presumably, contact, under favorable conditions, at least, changes the cognitive state of individuals with respect to interethnic relations.

Two conclusions, therefore, seem warranted. In the first place, contact with whites may well affect a respondent's image of Stokes. Indeed, some observers have suggested that black voting is almost entirely in reaction to white pressures. Further, any adequate test of whether or not contact does affect the perception of Stokes must incorporate the conditions under which the contact occurred.

Keeping the second point in mind, the method of operationalizing the variable. Contact with whites was as follows: The number of weekly contacts with whites ("How often are you around white people - almost every day, once or twice a week, less than once a week, or never?") was weighted by two conditions identified by Allport (1954) as favorable. That is, the weekly number of contacts was weighted by (a) whether or

not that contact was of equal status, rather than super-ordinate ("Have any whites visited socially in your home, or have you visited socially in a white home in the last month or so?") and (b) whether or not the weekly contact involved the attainment of common goals ("Do you personally know any white professionals - such as doctors, nurses, lawyers, school teachers, or librarians?") This procedure resulted in a scale ranging from a low score of 0.0 to a high score of 12.0. Thus, those respondents who are never around whites receive a score of 0.0; those who have daily contact with whites but under unfavorable conditions receive a score of 4.0; while those who have daily contact with whites under the most favorable conditions receive a score of 12.0.

E. Independent variable: City Service Satisfaction. City Service Satisfaction is a measure of how satisfied the respondents were with the city services they received. This variable was operationalized by factor scaling four items which dealt with four types of city services. (Respondents indicated on a five point scale how satisfied they were with "public schools," "neighborhood parks and playgrounds," "garbage collection," and "police protection").

RESULTS

Using hierarchical multiple regression analysis, three dummy variables representing System Perception were first entered, then each of the independent variables was separately entered, and finally variables representing the interactions of the independent variables with System Perception was

entered. Significance tests were then done on the increase in the explained variance due to the addition of the independent variables and their interactions.

Racial identification

Neither racial identification nor its interactions with System Perception significantly increased the variance explained by System Perception (0.7%), $F_{(396,1)} < 1.00$.

Interracial contact

The results summarized in Table 4 indicate that there is a significant interaction effect between System perception and Interracial contact, $F_{(395,3)} = 2.42$, $p \leq .05$, although the main effect of Interracial contact is not significant ($F_{(396,1)} < 1.00$).

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Table 4 about here
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The regression coefficients of the two variables carrying the interaction of the Neutral and Alienated types of perception (NxC and AxC) were significant ($p < .05$ and $p < .01$, respectively). In addition, the zero order correlations of these two interaction variables were both positive. Therefore, "high" Interracial contact for these two types of perception was associated with a "high" Political Image while "high" Interracial contact for the Dissident perception type was associated with a "low" Political Image.

Thus, it appears that for only one group, the Dissidents, did support for Stokes depend upon "low" Interracial contact.

For one group, the Supportives, Interracial contact had no effect, and for two groups, the Neutrals and the Alienated, Interracial contact increased support for Stokes.

City Service Satisfaction

The effect of City Service Satisfaction on Political Image is summarized in Table 5.

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Table 5 about here
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City Service Satisfaction significantly increased the amount of variance already explained by System Perception for Political Image. The variance explained was increased from 0.8% to 1.7% ($F_{(396,1)} = 2.36$, $p < .05$).

High City Service Satisfaction was associated with a more positive Poltical Image. The positive association of Political Image with City Service Satisfaction suggests that at least part of Stokes' support was based upon the voters' evaluation of Stokes as competently performing his duties as Mayor rather than racial intolerance.

Moreover, the increase in the amount of variance explained by the interaction of System Perception and City Service Satisfaction was not significant. Thus, the effect was similar for all four groups.

DISCUSSION

If racial intolerance is indicated by the overwhelming black vote that a black candidate receives when competing against a white, then the evaluations that those voters have of the black candidate should be positively related to Racial

Identification, negatively related to Interracial Contact, and not related to City Service Satisfaction.

These results indicate that while racial identification is not related to the black candidate's image, interracial contact is related to a more positive image for some voters. For only one group of voters, characterized by a dissident view of the political system, is a positive image of the black candidate related to low interracial contact.

Further, the finding that Stokes' image was related to City Service Satisfaction also suggests that support for a black candidate is not based upon racial intolerance.

Table 1

TYPES OF SYSTEM PERCEPTION

Responsiveness	*Interest*		
	Low	*High*	
Low	Type 1 "Alienated" n = 80	Type 2 "Dissident" n = 104	184
High	Type 3 "Neutral" n = 127	Type 4 "Supportive" n = 89	116
	107	193	n = 400

Table 2

DESCRIPTIVE PHRASES APPLIED TO STOKES

HONEST[a]	(288)
RUTHLESS	(4)
MILITANT	(9)
COURAGEOUS[a]	(156)
INTELLIGENT[a]	(306)
UNDERHANDED	(3)
FLASHY	(4)
OUT OF HIMSELF	(4)
HARDWORKING[a]	(240)
RACIALLY PREJUDICED	(0)
PROGRESSIVE[a]	(177)

NOTE: These phrases were commonly applied to Stokes in the Cleveland mass media. The number in parentheses indicates the number of respondents selecting the item.

[a]Only these phrases were chosen frequently enough to be used in the analysis.

Table 3

REGRESSION STATISTICS FOR CRITERION SCALING OF HONESTY

Image Item	0-Order Correlation	Regression Coefficient	Regression Coefficient Standard Error	Standardized Regression Coefficient	Coefficient Significance	Unique Variance
Honest	-.21	.1429	.0353	.2888	< .05	.046
Intelligent	.06	.0073	.0386	.0139	n.s.	.004
Hardworking	.02	.0418	.0357	.0922	n.s.	.000
Courageous	.02	.0354	.0369	.0777	n.s.	.000
Progressive	.03	.0528	.0362	.1180	n.s.	.005

Regression Constant	Regression Constant Standard Error	Regression Significance	Prop. of Total Variance Explained
1.3012	.0356	n.s.	.05

NOTE: Non-significant coefficients are indicated by n.s.

Table 4

REGRESSION STATISTICS FOR POLITICAL IMAGE AND CONTACT WITH WHITES

Predictor Variable	0-Order Correlation	Regression Coefficient	Regression Coefficient Standard Error	Standardized Regression Coefficient	Coefficient Significance	Unique Variance
Neutral	-.04	-.063	.023	-.283	<.01	0.2%
Alienated	.03	-.070	.026	-.270	<.01	0.0%
Supportive	-.06	-.043	.027	-.171	n.s.	0.6%
Contact	.08	-.004	.003	-.134	n.s.	0.6%
(Interaction)						
NXC	.05	.009	.004	.248	<.05	1.4%
AXC	.11	.013	.004	.301	<.01	1.3%
SXC	-.05	.003	.004	.010	n.s.	0.1%

Regression Constant	Regression Constant Standard Error	Regression Significance	Prop. of Total Variance Explained
-1.206	.018	<.05	4.3%

NOTE: Non-significant significance levels are indicated by n.s. These significance levels do not indicate the significance of increments in the explained variance.

Table 5

REGRESSION STATISTICS FOR HONESTY IMAGE AND CITY SERVICE SATISFACTION

Predictor Variable	0-Order Correlation	Regression Coefficient	Regression Coefficient Standard Error	Standardized Regression Coefficient	Coefficient Significance	Unique Variance
Neutral	-.04	-.016	.014	-.070	n.s.	0.2%
Alienated	.03	-.008	.016	-.030	n.s.	0.0%
Supportive	-.06	-.009	.016	-.036	n.s.	0.6%
City	.11	.005	.009	.051	n.s.	0.9%
(Interaction)						
NXC	.05	.002	.012	.014	n.s.	0.0%
AXC	-.02	-.007	.013	-.036	n.s.	0.4%
SXC	.16	.250	.014	.132	n.s.	1.0%

Regression Constant	Regression Constant Standard Error	Regression Significance	Prop. of Total Variance Explained
-1.227	.010	n.s.	3.1%

NOTE: Non-significant significance levels are indicated by n.s. These significance levels do not reflect the significance of increments in the explained variance.

FOOTNOTES

[1] Factor scaling is a method of deriving optimally reliable scales using principle components analysis (Armor, 1970).

[2] This operationalization is not completely satisfactory. Campbell and Schuman (1968) note that only 13 percent of the black respondents in their study wanted to live in all black neighborhoods and only 6 percent wanted their children to go to all black schools. In view of the frequently dilapidated condition of all black neighborhoods and schools, these findings may reflect a realistic assessment of existing social conditions, and therefore, raise questions about my operationalization.